

JOHN

Chapter 9

Jesus Heals a Man Born Blind

As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. ² His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” ³ **“Neither this man nor his parents sinned,”** said Jesus, **“but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life. ⁴ As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. ⁵ While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”** ⁶ Having said this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man’s eyes. ⁷ **“Go,”** he told him, **“wash in the Pool of Siloam”** (this word means Sent). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing. ⁸ His neighbors and those who had formerly seen him begging asked, “Isn’t this the same man who used to sit and beg?” ⁹ Some claimed that he was. Others said, “No, he only looks like him.” But he himself insisted, “I am the man.” ¹⁰ “How then were your eyes opened?” they demanded. ¹¹ He replied, “The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could see.” ¹² “Where is this man?” they asked him. “I don’t know,” he said.

9:1-41 The carefully constructed gospel of John records only seven miraculous *sēmeia*, “signs,” performed by Jesus. Our chapter records the sixth. These “signs” point beyond themselves, from the gift to the Giver, leading us to ask, What does this sign reveal about Jesus? The broad context of our chapter extends to Jn 20:30–31 (RSV): “Jesus did many other signs . . . which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.” How, then, does this sign lead us to believe in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God? (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 6, Part 2)

The Law/Gospel theme of darkness/light, introduced in Jn 1:4, extends throughout the gospel. It is prominent in 7:14–8:59, the section preceding our text, in which controversy over Jesus arises at the Festival of Tabernacles. The conflict is brought to a head by Jesus’ messianic claim, “I am the light of the world” (8:12). Chapter 9 continues this controversy (*schisma*, “schism, division,” 9:16). The theme of light versus darkness also continues as Jesus, “the light of the world” (9:5), brings sight and light—both physical and spiritual—to a man born blind in darkness—again, both physical and spiritual. Opposition occurs, as it did in chapters 7 and 8, and will in chapter 10, when John will move from light to the metaphors of the door and the Good Shepherd. All this opposition is part of Jesus’ movement toward the cross. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 6, Part 2)

In John 7–8, Jesus is teaching in the temple. He shines as the light of the world (8:12) by his teaching, yet the Jews purposely close their eyes. They reject Jesus to the point

of attempting to stone him (8:59). Leaving the temple unharmed, Jesus passes by a man blind from birth in the text for this Sunday. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 2)

9:1–12 Jesus performed more miracles of this kind than of any other. Giving sight to the blind was predicted as a Messianic activity (Isa 29:18; 35:5; 42:7). Thus these miracles were additional evidence that Jesus was the Messiah (20:31). (CSB)

9:1-7 The gospels record many instances of Jesus giving sight to the blind. This miracle was an act of God and a sign of the Messianic age (Is 29:18; 35:5; 42:7; 61:1 LXX; Lk 4:18; 7:22). Our chapter is the only account in John’s gospel of Jesus giving sight to a blind man (though general references occur in Jn 10:21; 11:37; cf. 5:3). This sign declares Jesus to be Messiah and Lord, come as the Son of the Father, into a world of darkness, to be the “light of the world” (1:4, 9; 8:12; 9:5). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 6, Part 2)

The disciples expect their question about the man’s blindness to be answered as a matter of cause and effect. They see the effect, the blindness, and conclude there has to be a specific sinful cause. Jesus has other ideas. Jesus desires that the spotlight shine on him because he is “the light of the world” (v 5; see also 8:12). His method of healing would only seem to make matters worse: spit and mud in the man’s eyes. But like Naaman in 2 Ki 5:14, the man washes in a specific body of water, the pool of Siloam, according to the Lord’s word. The man sees. Siloam is from Is 8:6, where the Israelites reject the blessings flowing out of Jerusalem. John translates Siloam as “Sent” or “Sent One.” The one on whom the spotlight shines is Jesus, the light of the world, through a miraculous deed that only God could do (v 33). As the Pharisees did not recognize Jesus as the light through Jesus’ words, so do they not recognize Jesus as the light through the miracle (10:37–38). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 2)

This healing has four unique features, each of which is significant:

1. The man was blind from birth. All of us are spiritually blind from birth, in need of God’s forgiveness and light to give us sight. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 6, Part 2)

2. The reason for blindness is discussed. In v 2 the disciples offer two Law-based reasons. The man’s condition must be the result of sin, they reason, but since an unborn child would have had little opportunity to commit actual sins, they surmise that perhaps his parents’ sins were responsible. Jesus rejects both suggestions and says the blindness is an opportunity for the Gospel to shine forth and God’s work to be done while it is still day (vv 3–4). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 6, Part 2)

3. Jesus uses means (spittle and clay) to heal. Most Reformed commentators, and even Lenski (pp. 679–82) are at a loss to explain the significance of Jesus’ means. In Mk 7:33 Jesus used his spittle to heal a speechless man, and in Mk 8:23 Jesus healed a

blind man by means of spittle and laying on his hands, but without clay. Here, Jesus' act with the spittle and clay is termed "anoint" in both v 6 and v 11 (*epichriō*, "to anoint," 9:6, 11; NIV: "put it on"). This anointing, together with the washing, may point to the later anointing of Christians with the Holy Spirit through Jesus' breath (Jn 20:22) and in Holy Baptism. Cf. Jesus' "anointing" of Christians with the Spirit (*chrisma*, 1 in 2:20, 27; *chriō*, "to anoint," 2 Cor 1:21–22), and Jesus anointed (*chriō*, "to anoint," Lk 4:18; Acts 4:27; 10:38; Heb 1:9). All of these passages allude to Holy Baptism as the means. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 6, Part 2)

The Pharisees would have considered Jesus to violate several of their regulations (v 16). On the Sabbath they prohibited both anointing and healing, and they probably considered Jesus' making of the clay mixture to be the "work" of kneading, which they prohibited on the Sabbath (Talmud references in Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971] p. 480, note 17). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 6, Part 2)

4. Jesus told the man to wash in the pool of Siloam, which means "sent" (*shalach*). John frequently describes Jesus as the one "sent" (from *apostellō*) by the Father, so Jesus' words and deeds are of the Father. Interestingly, it was a practice at the Festival of Tabernacles to pour on the altar water from the Pool of Siloam. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 6, Part 2)

9:1 AS HE WENT ALONG – Specific location not given. Since it was on the Sabbath (v 14), it was likely the temple area. (TLSB)

This story is simply the continuation of the previous narrative, for the events here told occurred as Jesus passed along, probably out of the Temple, near whose gates many beggars were wont to assemble. It so happened that His eye rested upon a blind man. It is a peculiarity of God's providence that He often manifests His power in little incidents which seem to us chance happenings. The man that drew the attention of Jesus had been blind from his birth. (Kretzmann)

9:2 who sinned ... ? The rabbis had developed the principle that "There is no death without sin, and there is no suffering without iniquity." They were even capable of preexistent state. They also held that terrible punishments came on certain people because of the sin of their parents. As the next verse shows, Jesus plainly contradicted these beliefs. (CSB)

Many people believed that suffering resulted from a specific sin. The man's blindness would therefore be punishment for a particular sin of his parents or some sin he committed in the womb. (TLSB)

The disciples, who also noticed the poor unfortunate man, voiced the opinion of the general public when they asked Jesus whether his affliction was due to some sin which he himself had committed or to some fault of his parents. Their question gives Jesus an opportunity to repudiate the popular belief as though each particular sickness or sorrow

is traceable to some particular sin. It is true in general, of course, that sin has been followed by all manner of physical ailments and weaknesses, which are in themselves only forerunners of death, the wages of sin. It is true, also, that certain sins, especially those of impurity, will bring direct punishment to the body. But to scent exceptional transgression whenever any severe misfortune or sickness strikes an individual or a family, is almost invariably an injustice and savors of the judging and condemning against which the Lord warns. Cp. Luke 13, 1-5. (Kretzmann)

ina is resultative. That they asked Jesus, shows that they believed in his omniscience. People believed that there was a one-to-one result of sin and punishment, therefore they believed that this man was born blind because of a specific sin.

9:3 THIS HAPPENED SO – All imperfections result from sin but there is not a one-to-one correlation. Jesus had come to save this man and not punish him so this was be that opportunity.

Not merely restoration of physical sight (v. 7), but deliverance from spiritual darkness. (TLSB)

Jesus therefore taught His disciples the truth with regard to this man and all other unfortunate sick people. In this special case, for instance, the work of God, His power and might, should become manifest. (Kretzmann)

9:4 we. Not Jesus only. (CSB)

AS LONG AS IT DAY – Work must be done while there opportunity is available.

And the Lord added that He, or, according to some manuscripts, we, His followers, together with Him, are under obligation to work, to carry out the works of Him that sent Christ into the world. There is no false understanding as to the nature and scope of the work and office which He must perform in the world, nor is there the slightest hesitation as to attacking the work with all the willingness of a heart bound up in God's will. The present time is the day of Christ; now is the time of grace; now He must be about His own and His Father's business. That same spirit must live in the followers of Christ, that must characterize all their efforts for the spread of the Kingdom and all their work in the interest of the kingdom of God. Every bit of time, every ounce of strength should be thrown into this most important work. For soon the night of death will come, and that will definitely put a stop to all work with and for the Lord. (Kretzmann)

NIGHT – Elsewhere in John carries overtones of spiritual darkness (3:2; 11:10; 13:30). (TLSB)

9:5 WHILE I AM IN THE WORLD – kosmo means that “among men.”

OF THE WORLD – This kosmou is an objective genitive and means “sinful men.”

the light of the world. See note on 8:12. (CSB)

As for Himself, Jesus states that His choice and its obligation were clear to Him; as long as He is in the world, His office of being the Light of the world must not cease. That work He had explained at length to the Jews, and the trend of the conversation here recalled the explanation. The reference would tend to increase the emphasis of His willingness to work for the benefit and salvation of the world. (Kretzmann)

9:6 SPIT ON THE GROUND, MADE SOME MUD – Jesus violated the rabbinic rules concerning the Sabbath. The rabbis listed kneading dough among 39 forms of work forbidden on the Sabbath, a law though also to cover the mixing of earth and saliva. (TLSB)

PUT IT ON THE MAN'S EYES – In ancient times, salvia was thought to have curative powers (e.g., how animals clean themselves). (TLSB)

Jesus used variety in his cures.

And now Jesus proceeded deliberately to perform the miracle of healing the blind man, who had undoubtedly heard every word of the conversation, with the sweetness of its Gospel-message. (Kretzmann)

9:7 Siloam. Already an ancient name (see NIV text note on Ne 3:15; see also Isa 8:6). A rock-cut pool on the southern end of the main ridge on which Jerusalem was built, it served as part of the major water system developed by King Hezekiah. (CSB)

Part of a system that brought water from Gihon Spring in the Kidron Valley to an upper and lower pool in Jerusalem. The Siloam pool was surrounded by a courtyard and was likely larger than it is today. (TLSB)

The little pool of Siloam was mightier than the Euphrates River. It was a type of Christ, as John explains in parenthesis. Christ was the One Sent.

He formed a paste by moistening a little clay with spittle from His mouth, placed it upon the eyes of the blind man, and then sent him down to the pool Siloam to wash. The pool Siloah, or Siloam, was the one from which the water was taken on the day of the great Hosannah, the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles, whose pouring out symbolized the sending of the Spirit. Jesus in this case arranged the circumstantial details at such unusual length in order to emphasize that the healing was performed by Him. The blind man, whose faith in Jesus had meanwhile been firmly grounded, did not hesitate for a moment to carry out the orders of Christ. He went away and washed himself and returned seeing. (Kretzmann)

Sent. Or “one who has been sent.” (CSB)

Reminds the reader that Jesus is the sent by the Father and the blind man was sent by Jesus – wordplay that brings the story together around the theme of sending. (TLSB)

SO THE MAN WENT – oun is responsive. That he went shows that he believed.

9:8-12 Two groups are involved: the man’s neighbors and those who knew him as a beggar. (There were few other “career opportunities” for a blind person in those days). The man confesses that Jesus healed him, but does not yet confess faith in Jesus as the Christ. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 6, Part 2)

The blind man is also identified as a beggar, one dependent on others for his well-being. The healing creates a sensation among the people. They demand an explanation. The man gives a matter-of-fact, objective account. They desire to see Jesus, but the man does not know where Jesus is, though there is no indication he would even know Jesus if he saw him. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 2)

9:8 *begging*. Not mentioned previously, but it was about the only way a blind person of that day could support himself. (CSB)

Many blind men could do little else in the ancient world than ask for charity alongside the roadways. (However, consider the cultural contributions of Homer and Didymus.). (TLSB)

The blind man had returned to the city, to his home. Jesus meanwhile continued His way elsewhere. The people of the neighborhood, seeing the former blind man walking about with the manifest ability to use the sense of sight, were filled with the greatest surprise. (Kretzmann)

9:9 ONLY LOOKS LIKE HIM – Others there were that were ready to identify him as the man that had formerly plied his vocation as beggar. The miracle was so singular that they all were somewhat doubtful as to his identity, some saying that it was he, others, that he only resembled him. But the former blind man settled the discussion by frankly maintaining that he was one and the same. (Kretzmann)

HE HIMSELF INSISTED – Allusion to the Gospel’s repeated use of the words “I am.” John playfully draws attention to this emphasis. “I am the man” literally means “I am.” (TLSB)

9:10 THEY DEMANDED – Note how minute, distinct, and true to life the narration flows along. The neighbors and all that had come together now eagerly pressed him with questions as to the manner in which he had received his sight. (Kretzmann)

9:11 HE REPLIED – And he related it truthfully. He had never seen Jesus, but he had heard His name. He knew that Jesus put some kind of paste on his dead eyes, which he afterwards found to be clay; how this had been made he could not tell, because he

had not seen. He knew that by following directions he had been given his sight, and he was still filled with the wonder of it all. (Kretzmann)

9:12 I DON'T KNOW – Upon the further question as to the whereabouts of his benefactor, the former blind man can truthfully say only that he does not know. Though Jesus was well known in some parts of Palestine at that time, there were many people that did not yet know Him. They may have heard of Him in a vague way as the great Prophet and Healer, but His name and His person were not well known in Jerusalem. (Kretzmann)

The Pharisees Investigate the Healing

13 They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. 14 Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man's eyes was a Sabbath. 15 Therefore the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. "He put mud on my eyes," the man replied, "and I washed, and now I see." 16 Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath." But others asked, "How can a sinner do such miraculous signs?" So they were divided. 17 Finally they turned again to the blind man, "What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened." The man replied, "He is a prophet." 18 The Jews still did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they sent for the man's parents. 19 "Is this your son?" they asked. "Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see?" 20 "We know he is our son," the parents answered, "and we know he was born blind. 21 But how he can see now, or who opened his eyes, we don't know. Ask him. He is of age; he will speak for himself." 22 His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews, for already the Jews had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ would be put out of the synagogue. 23 That was why his parents said, "He is of age; ask him." 24 A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. "Give glory to God," they said. "We know this man is a sinner." 25 He replied, "Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!" 26 Then they asked him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" 27 He answered, "I have told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples, too?" 28 Then they hurled insults at him and said, "You are this fellow's disciple! We are disciples of Moses! 29 We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don't even know where he comes from." 30 The man answered, "Now that is remarkable! You don't know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. 31 We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does his will. 32 Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. 33 If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." 34 To this they replied, "You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!" And they threw him out.

9:13-17 The Light of the world also brings judgment against those who reject the Light and prefer darkness instead. The Pharisees were blinded by their legalism and self-

righteousness. One group of the divided Pharisees argues from the Sabbath breach, the other from the miracle. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 6, Part 2)

Both faith and opposition grow. Note the progression of the healed man's faith. First he says Jesus is a man (v 11), then a prophet (v 17), then a righteous man sent from God and doing the will of God (vv 30–33); finally, the healed man believes in and worships Jesus as the Son of Man (vv 35–38). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 6, Part 2)

Note an opposite progression with the Pharisees. First they say Jesus is a Sabbath-breaker (v 16) not from God (vv 16, 29). They doubt his miracle (v 18), and agree to expel any who confess Jesus as the Christ (v 22). Then they put the healed man under oath and assert that Jesus is a sinner (v 25). Finally they are shown to be ignorant as they are taught by the healed man, whom they expel (v 34), and Jesus declares them to be (spiritually) blind sinners (vv 40–41). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 6, Part 2)

Unable to talk to Jesus, the people seek out the Pharisees. They should know how this happened. John makes a point of telling us that the healing occurred on a Sabbath and that mud was made as part of the treatment. Jesus had already been criticized for his Sabbath work (5:18) and claiming to be equal with God. Some attempt to discredit Jesus again by accusing him of sinning, by working on the Sabbath. Others draw the conclusion that such a sign could never be done by a sinner, thus dividing the Jews. So they ask the man who had been healed what he says about Jesus. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 2)

9:13 *Pharisees*. See notes on Mt 3:7; Mk 2:16; Lk 5:17. (CSB)

The matter was of such importance that the people deemed it their duty to bring the man to the rulers of the people, among whom the Pharisees were the most prominent. (Kretzmann)

The preceding events were so extraordinary that religious authorities had to be consulted for their opinion. (TLSB)

9:14 *Sabbath*. Cf. 5:16 and the discussion that follows. (CSB)

Jesus deliberately healed him on the Sabbath to make them look at their own perverted religion.

To these sticklers for external forms and observances the most important point was of course this, that the healing had been done on a Sabbath. (Kretzmann)

9:15 PHARISEES ALSO ASKED – he had already been asked in verse 10. He answers with a second rehearsal of the facts.

The mixing of the clay, in their estimation, was the work of a mason, and the order to the man to go and wash himself an unnecessary piece of work. So the Pharisees promptly took the man and cross-questioned him as to how he had received his sight. The man's testimony was not to be shaken. He gave them the same account which he had given the neighbors. And the hypocrites immediately pounced upon the fact that the healing had been done on the Sabbath; that was the charge against the Healer. Jesus had, as it seems, purposely performed the miracle on the Sabbath, in order to give offense to the Pharisees. He gave these malicious people, that refused to accept the truth, reasons to become ever more offended and thus to fulfill the measure of their transgressions. That is the terrible punishment of unbelief, the self-hardening of the heart. But some of the members of the Sanhedrin, whose spiritual insight had not been altogether lost, made the hesitating remark: How can a sinner do such signs ? (Kretzmann)

9:16 THIS MAN IS NOT FROM GOD – They were saying that he was an outcast because he had broken the rules of the Sabbath.

Some ... others. The first group started from their entrenched position and ruled out the possibility of Jesus' being from God. The second started from the fact of the "miraculous signs" and ruled out the possibility of his being a sinner (cf. vv. 31–33). (CSB)

Two schools of thought divided the Pharisees. Some questioned Jesus' authority by focusing on His alleged violation of Sabbath law. Others argued that only one sent from God could perform such a miracle (cf. Ac 5:38–39). (TLSB)

They felt that God would not permit an open transgressor of His holy Law to go unpunished, much less give to him such unusual powers to perform miracles. The result of the entire discussion was that there was a division in the council, they could not come to an agreement in their judgment of the case. (Kretzmann)

9:17 What have you to say about him? It is curious that they put such a question to such a person; their doing so reflected their perplexity. (CSB)

a prophet. Probably the highest designation of which the man could think. He progressed in his thinking about Jesus: from a man (v. 11), to a prophet (v. 17) who might be followed by disciples (v. 27), to one "from God" (v. 33), to one who was properly to be worshiped (v. 38). (CSB)

The blind man's faith and confession will reveal a deeper understanding of Jesus (v. 33). At this point, he can at least state the obvious: Jesus is at minimum a prophet, a man sent from God with extraordinary powers. (TLSB)

For a digression, they asked the former blind man what he thought of his benefactor. He did not hesitate for a moment to confess Christ, whom he had never seen, as a great prophet sent by God, thus ascribing his healing to God. The enemies of Christ are

always on the lookout for some way of discrediting the miracles of the Gospel, but they have no success; the Word of God stands too secure. (Kretzmann)

9:18-23 The Pharisees tried to discredit the miracle. The man's parents were afraid to confess Jesus and so tried to appear neutral. "He is of age" (vv 21, 23) means he can and should answer for himself. To "put out of the synagogue" (vv 22; similarly vv 34, 35) is the Jewish equivalent of excommunication. There were two forms: a temporary exclusion for 30 days, and a permanent ban. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 6, Part 2)

One way to refuse to believe Jesus is equal to the Father (5:18) is to discredit the miracle, saying and proving it never happened. So the man's parents are called in and attest that their son had been born blind. Since birth he had never been able to see. The parents do not speculate on how their son now sees. They send the Jews back to their son for the answer, protecting their synagogue status by keeping quiet about Jesus. (At vv 18 and 22, John appears to use the term *Jews* in reference to the Pharisees.) (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 2)

9:18 *the Jews*. See note on 1:19. In their prejudice they did not learn from the sign but tried to discredit the miracle. (CSB)

STILL DIDN'T BELIEVE THAT HE HAD BEEN BLIND – They are writing Jesus' miracle off as a hoax.

The Jewish rulers, having found the testimony of the former blind man too simple to permit any questioning, now tried to invalidate his statements by expressing doubts as to his former blindness. (Kretzmann)

9:19 IS THIS THE ONE YOU SAY WAS BORN BLIND – Now they are grilling the parents and putting them on trial.

In an effort to discredit the whole matter, therefore, they called the parents before their tribunal. Mark the procedure of a typical hierarchical government. The parents were asked whether they were sure as to the identity of this man, and also whether they knew in what way he had received his sight. (Kretzmann)

9:20-21 The parents' restrained response reflected their fear of the Jewish authorities (v 22). (TLSB)

9:20 HE IS OUR SON – We can very well imagine the scene, the timid old people shrinking back before the overbearing manner of the inquisitors, hardly daring to open their mouth, for fear of saying something that would offend the mighty ones. They could testify as to their son's having been born blind, but they were very careful to remain absolutely neutral, to retain a disinterested attitude as to any possible miracle, for the Jews had threatened all those that would confess Christ or speak in His favor with excommunication. (Kretzmann)

9:21 *He is of age.* There was much to which the parents could not testify, but their emphasis on the son's responsibility showed their fear of getting involved. (CSB)

The parents deftly avoided the dispute, while witnessing to the miracle. (TLSB)

The age of legal maturity was 13 years and 1 day. (TLSB)

WE DON'T KNOW ASK HIM – They are back peddling and putting the ball in the boy's court. They don't want to get in trouble with the Pharisees even if they have to abandon their son.

They referred the examiners to the man himself. He was of age, and he was fully able to speak for himself. They did not want to risk excommunication, since that shut them out from practically all intercourse with any but the lowest class of people. (Kretzmann)

9:22 *put out of the synagogue.* Excommunication is reported as early as the time of Ezra (10:8), but there is practically no information about the way it was practiced in NT times. The synagogue was the center of Jewish community life, so excommunication cut a person off from many social relationships (though, in some of its forms, at least in later times, not from worship). (CSB)

Gk *aposynagogus*, expulsion from fellowship with the synagogue; a type of excommunication, though its precise form is uncertain. (TLSB)

And that was the understanding among the members of the Sanhedrin, to put the confessors of Christ out of the Church. "Of excommunication there were three degrees: the first lasted for thirty days; then followed a 'second admonition,' and if impenitent, the culprit was punished for thirty days more; and if still impenitent, he was laid under the *cheer*, or ban, which was of indefinite duration, and which entirely cut him off from intercourse with others~ He was treated as if he were a leper. This, to persons as poor as the parents of this beggar, would mean ruin and death." Note: It is a terrible judgment upon unbelief that the unbelievers cannot see the plainest and surest facts which are held before their eyes. The resurrection of Christ, the inerrancy of the Bible, and scores of other facts which have the testimony of the best witnesses in the world on their side are still being questioned by people that claim for themselves fairness. But their blindness is so dense that they can no longer see the light. (Kretzmann)

9:24-34 The Pharisees put Moses and Jesus in opposition rather than seeing a connection of grace. The Pharisees focus on their ancestry and position and works, which blinded them to the Light. Like the disciples (v 2), they only think only in terms of Law, sin, and punishment. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 6, Part 2)

The Jews approach the man a second time, expecting him to change his confession (v 17) of who Jesus is. The man does not back down. When asked how Jesus opened his eyes, the man interjects some sarcasm by asking if they wanted to be Jesus' disciples.

The Jews claim they are disciples of Moses (v 28). But Jesus has already spoken about Moses. Moses wrote about Jesus (5:46)! The spotlight in the Old Testament was on Jesus (5:39). The Jews rely on their understanding of the nature of blindness, thinking that the man was a terrible sinner because he had been born blind. The Jews fail to discredit the miracle, so they throw the man out. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 2)

9:24 *We*. Emphatic in the Greek. (CSB)

A SECOND TIME THEY SUMMONED – ephonasan shows their absolute authority over the people.

The Pharisees were in a quandary. If the facts concerning this miracle were spread abroad, the fame of Christ would grow and be carried out in all directions, and their prestige would receive a severe jolt. Therefore they made another attempt to shake the testimony of the man, but this time in such a way as to make him deny that a miracle had been performed. With a sanctimonious air they admonish him to give glory to God alone by telling the actual truth, and not a piece of fiction invented for the benefit of Jesus. There is almost a bit of threatening in the words: We know that this Man is a sinner. The deduction was that it must have been impossible to perform what the man claimed had been done. (Kretzmann)

Give glory to God. In God's name, swear to tell the whole truth. (TLSB)

MAN IS A SINNER – Transgressor of the Law; violation of Sabbath law was very serious matter (cf. Nu. 15:32-36). (TLSB)

9:25 ONE THING I DO KNOW – The man sticks to the facts. The simple facts of the great work Jesus performed for us is all we need to witness to.

But the man doggedly stuck to the truth; he was not concerned about the sinfulness or sinlessness of his benefactor. One thing he knew: Having been blind, he could now see. This same simple faith and dogged perseverance should characterize a Christian's confession of Jesus. If unbelievers try to shake the testimony concerning Conversion or regeneration, the simple adhering to that one truth: I know the experience of my own heart and mind; it is not an illusion, but it is the firmest conviction in the world, will often repulse the enemies. (Kretzmann)

9:26 THE THEY ASKED HIM – Two more questions of doubt.

In the effort to shake the firmness of this witness, the Jews again asked him about the manner in which his eyes had been opened. It is hardly to be wondered at that the matter was getting on the man's nerves and that he answered them rather tartly. He had told them once, and they had evidently not listened very well; why should he repeat the same testimony over and over again? Their silly effort to inveigle him into some inconsistent statement was a despicable piece of strategy. (Kretzmann)

9:27 YOU DID NOT LISTEN – He grows impatient with their stubborn unbelief and he also become bolder.

his disciples, too. The man already counted himself a disciple. (CSB)

He is saying that he wants to be Jesus' disciple. He is not afraid. They were trying him and now he is putting them on trial not by returning their invective with one of his own but by simply witnessing.

Biting sarcasm, indicating the man's courage and character. (TLSB)

9:28 HURLED INSULTS – But the man's taunt as to their wishing to become disciples of Jesus struck them in a tender place. Angrily they reviled him, charging him with being a disciple of that Man. They placed Jesus in the class of outcasts with whom they wanted nothing to do. (Kretzmann)

9:29 DISCIPLES OF MOSES – But so far as they were concerned, they were the disciples of Moses, they piously assert. They were sure, in the case of Moses, that God had spoken with him; but in the case of this Man they have nothing definite to base their opinion on, they do not even know His origin. That was partly willful ignorance, partly blasphemous malice. They had had plenty of opportunity to get the information they desired, if they had only been willing to follow the directions of Jesus, chap. 7, 17. Note: Unbelievers that attempt to be clever and sarcastic at the same time, throw aspersions upon the virgin birth of Christ, thus also questioning His origin, whereas a simple reading of Scripture would convince them, if they would not consistently resist the Holy Ghost. (Kretzmann)

Questions the legitimacy of Jesus' right to speak in God's name. (TLSB)

9:30–33 Good reasoning from an unschooled man. (CSB)

9:30 YOU DON'T KNOW WHERE HE COMES FROM – He preaches to them. He puts their great learning to shame.

Far from making the man dubious and timid in his statements, the method chosen by the Pharisees rather made him firmer in his position toward the Man who had given him the great blessing of sight. The astonishment of the man was well founded. The leaders of the Jews should have known such a wonderful Healer. To hesitate about the origin of one that performed such wonderful cures and manifested such divine power was foolish in his opinion, and he did not hesitate about telling the Jewish leaders that very fact. (Kretzmann)

9:31 WE KNOW – oidamen means "everybody."

God does not listen to sinners. Cf. the remark of some of the Pharisees in v. 16. (CSB)

Only half true; all are sinners, but God does listen to those sinners who are His children, as a loving father listens to his beloved children. (TLSB)

HE LISTENS TO THE GODLY MAN – *thesebas* – The godly man constantly does God’s will and God does for him what he asks.

Certain it was that a sinner could not perform such deeds; God could not be induced to give such power to a person that deliberately transgressed His will. (Kretzmann)

9:32 NOBODY...OPENING EYES OF BLIND – But now the deed was an evidence of the power of God in the Healer. Therefore this man Jesus could not be a sinner, but must be from God. That a miracle of such magnitude should be performed in the world was unheard of. (Kretzmann)

A miracle of this kind was unprecedented, further proof to him that Jesus was not breaking the law. (TLSB)

9:33 IF THIS MAN WERE NOT FROM GOD – If Jesus, therefore, could perform such miracles, He must be from God. That was the right conclusion, one which completely vanquished the rulers of the Jews. This unlearned man could argue with much more exactness and power than they themselves, because he had the truth on his side. In the same way the simplest Christian, by adhering strictly to the truth of Scriptures, is able to confound the keenest and cleverest unbelievers that make the attempt to take away his faith in his Savior. (Kretzmann)

9:34 *threw him out.* May mean “expelled him from their assembly” or, more probably, “excommunicated him” (see note on v. 22). (CSB)

The former blind man's frankness enraged the Pharisees beyond measure. They now cast the popular belief into his face, telling him that his blindness was due to sin, and reproaching him with his calamity. That is the manner of unbelievers. When they are no longer able to contradict plain facts, they have recourse to vile insinuations and malicious blasphemies. And the Pharisees, in addition to their other insult, cast him out of the room where they had their sessions and took the first steps to put him out of the congregation as well. They willfully, deliberately closed their eyes against the plain facts that were before their eyes; they denied their reality; they throttled their own conscience. All their actions were a product of hypocrisy of the rankest kind, blasphemy without parallel. (Kretzmann)

Spiritual Blindness

³⁵ **Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?”** ³⁶ **“Who is he, sir?” the man asked. “Tell me so**

that I may believe in him.”³⁷ Jesus said, “**You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you.**”³⁸ Then the man said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped him.³⁹ Jesus said, “**For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind.**”⁴⁰ Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, “What? Are we blind too?”⁴¹ Jesus said, “**If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains.**”

9:35-38 Jesus’ final self-revelation results in faith, trust, and worship. Chrysostom observes: “The Jews cast him out from the Temple, and the Lord of the Temple found him.” He was cast out of the darkness and into the Light. Calvin in commenting on these verses cites the example of Luther, who resisted the religious powers of his day (darkness), was excommunicated, was drawn into the Light, and came to know the Light much more fully. The story of Luther makes a fine sermon illustration. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 6, Part 2)

The spotlight is back on Jesus, where it has been all the time, as the light of the world. To the man, Jesus is one from God. To the Jews, Jesus is a terrible sinner, a multiple violator of the Sabbath. Jesus encounters the man so the man can indeed confess that Jesus is true God from the Father, equal to the Father (5:18). The man’s posture and confession indicate (v 38) without any doubt what Jesus is trying to get the Jews (and you and me) to confess. No one can know Jesus just from a knowledge of sin. “How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?” (v 16). No one can know Jesus just through the conclusions reached about the healing. “Though I was blind, now I see” (v 25). Jesus is known through the divine revelation in Word and Sacrament. Jesus makes himself known to the man through the encounter with his word, giving the man faith (v 37). This revelation can be rejected (the Jews), and thus the judgment is upon them (v 41). Jesus’ point in vv 39–41 is similar to Mt 9:12. “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.” The Pharisees see. They have no need of someone to correct their vision, so to speak. They see that they are all right in their own eyes and way of thinking (self-righteous). So they are blind for the need for Christ. The blind beggar has need for the physician. Though no specific sin is attributed to him or his parents (v 3), the blindness is an effect of sin in a fallen world. Jesus uses this opportunity for the spotlight to shine on himself so that those in need (the blind) are enabled to receive help (vision) and see Jesus as the light of the world. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 2)

9:35 JESUS HEARD...FOUND HIM – Jesus had purposely absented himself, but not really. His Word sustained the man who was under trial and thus he grew spiritually. Jesus sought him out a second time. Jesus came to this man, not vice versa. He, too, comes to us.

when he found him. Jesus obviously had been looking for the man. (CSB)

Son of Man. See note on Mk 8:31. (CSB)

Jesus, who had carefully watched the case of the former blind man, soon found out that the Jewish rulers had begun the process of excommunication against him. He therefore took occasion to look him up and reassure him in a most wonderful way. The question of Jesus, whether he believed in the Son of God, was intended to work this faith in the man's heart, for such is the nature of the Word of God at all times. (Kretzmann)

9:36 The man was ready to follow any suggestion from his benefactor. (CSB)

9:38 *I believe.* See 20:31 and note on 1:7. (CSB)

Lord ... he worshiped him. The man was giving Jesus the reverence due to God. (CSB)

The man's faith grew from acknowledging Jesus as a prophet (v. 17) to confessing Him as being "from God" (v. 33) to honoring Him as Lord. This does not mean the man realized Jesus was God. Consider the faith of the disciples, which was genuine though they lacked full understanding of who Jesus was; cf. Mt. 8:23-27.) (TLSB)

The worship follows spontaneously the recognition of his divinity. Jesus nowhere required this worship of anyone.

The healed man was a believing Israelite; his faith was placed in the coming Messiah, of whom he knew that He was the Son of God. When he was therefore assured of the identity of the Son of God with the great Healer who was speaking to him, he gladly confessed his faith and showed it by his outward act of devotion, by bending his knee in worshipful prayer; he worshiped Jesus as God. Note: Jesus never loses sight of those in whom He has taken a personal interest. The solicitude of His saving mercy ever attends those that have received His benefits. (Kretzmann)

9:39-41 The purpose of Jesus' coming was that the blind (some physically, but all spiritually) may see. Those who refuse the Light are declared blind. Jesus did not desire to blind any, just as he did not come to judge (3:17; 8:15), yet his coming causes judgment as some further blind themselves by refusing to see who he is. Jesus' response is penetrating and indicting. If they had spiritual sight, they would respond differently to Jesus. To fail to confess our blindness and receive sight from Jesus is to remain in our guilt. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 6, Part 2)

What does this miracle reveal about Jesus? He is the one sent by God, the Son of Man, the Messiah, the Light of the world. Where there is darkness and blindness (sin and the "shadow of death," Mt 4:16), he brings sight and light (forgiveness, 1 Jn 1:7). His coming involves both Law and Gospel: it causes controversy and divides people in a way that points to the eternal separation between the "children of light" (Jn 12:36; Eph 5:8-13; 1 Thess 5:5) and "those who love darkness" (Jn 3:19), who will be cast into the outer darkness (Mt 8:12; 22:13; 25:30). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 6, Part 2)

How does this event bring about belief in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God? Faith is a gift, the result of Jesus' miraculous healing of our natural spiritual blindness. In our text, healing and faith in Jesus result from his anointing and washing (pointing to Holy Baptism) and his speaking (pointing to the Word). He heals us from the darkness of sin, death, and the devil by bringing us into the light of forgiveness and life. Those who see confess him despite persecution, but those who oppose him are blinded further, leading to judgment. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 6, Part 2)

9:39 It is unlikely that the conversation of vv. 35–38 took place in the presence of the Pharisees. The incident of vv. 39–41, therefore, probably occurred a little later. (CSB)

For judgment. In a sense Jesus did not come for judgment (3:17; 12:47), but his coming divides people, and this always brings a type of judgment. Those who reject his gift end up “blind.” (CSB)

Jesus did not come to condemn the world but to save it (3:16–17). His coming is a judgment, however, because those who reject Him bring everlasting condemnation upon themselves. (TLSB)

Jesus here makes the application, draws the moral of the events connected with the healing of the blind man. He announces that one function of His office is to carry out judgment, to put a certain separation into execution. Those that were spiritually blind and realized their pitiful condition should receive sight, while those that believed themselves endowed with spiritual and moral sight, while in reality they were hopelessly blind in spiritual matters, should become hopelessly darkened in their own conceit. Cf. Luke 2, 34. (Kretzmann)

9:40 *Pharisees.* They found it incredible that anyone would consider them spiritually blind. (CSB)

Some of the Pharisees, who were, as usual, dogging His footsteps and watching His every word, felt the sting of the last word of the Lord. Sneeringly they ask: Very likely you consider us also blind! And Jesus lost no time in giving them their reply. If their blindness, their natural inability toward all that is good before God, were known to them, then there would be some chance of healing them of their blindness. But so long as they do not realize their pitiful condition, so long as they do not know and will not acknowledge their own perversity and darkness in spiritual matters, their sin remains, they are left in the condemnation of their blindness, with the future damnation which it involves. (Kretzmann)

9:41 The Pharisees' claim to sight showed their complete unawareness of their spiritual blindness and need. And, though they claimed to have sight, their actions were evidence of their blindness. (CSB)

The spiritually blind refuse to acknowledge their need of the Savior in spite of what God's Word says about the human condition. Paradoxically, only when we realize we are blind (condemned by the Law as sinners) can we see. (TLSB)

IF YOU WERE BLIND – Here he indicates the natural spiritual blindness, the inability to recognize the truth.

YOUR GUILT REMAINS – Even in parting he is warning them once more that they are going to be damned if they do not believe in him.

The Pharisees rejected the Word of Christ, which alone is able to give light to the blind. And therefore they, and all that follow their foolish example, are struck by the judgment of God, according to which His gracious search for them is finally abandoned, and they are left to the fate which they have deliberately preferred to the mercy of the Savior. So the unbelievers are left to their self-chosen fate, the grace of God is withdrawn from them, and the Word of mercy is still preached in their presence, in order that they may take still greater offense and become hardened to their own destruction. (Kretzmann)

Ch 9 Jesus gives physical and spiritual sight—faith—to a man born blind, though the Pharisees accuse Jesus of violating the Sabbath and remain spiritually blind. We are all born spiritually blind, unable to see our sin and unwilling to do things God's way. But through Baptism and the Word, God has delivered us from the domain of darkness through His beloved Son and has enlightened our hearts to know and follow Him. • I praise You, O God, that though I once was blind, now I see! Lead me as I guide others to the truth of the Gospel. Amen. (TLSB)